

## Top General in Iraq Refuses to Set Timeline for Further Troop Withdrawals

Written by Mike Honda  
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This week, General David Petraeus, the top U.S. Commander in Iraq, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, testified before both chambers of Congress concerning the status of the war in Iraq and when we should expect to see our troops come home. This was the second in a series of testimonies expected from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker and after several hours of testimony, it was clear that the Bush Administration still has no plan for ending the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home.

Both General Petraeus and President Bush believe there should be a pause in the withdrawal of our troops from Iraq this summer. At a time when insurgent attacks and violence is at an extreme high in Iraq, particularly in Sadr city where an attack was recently made in the Green Zone, and over 4,000 of our troops have died, I find their unwillingness to start withdrawing our troops unacceptable.

As the war in Iraq continues unabated, the strain on our military increases and our brave men and servicewomen are forced to serve multiple tours for longer than they and their families expected. This is unfair to our soldiers and our families, and unfair to the vast majority of American people, who are ready for this war to end so that we can focus on our own needs, such as our suffering economy. A refusal to give Congress a timetable for additional troop withdrawals is irresponsible, ignores the concerns about the rising cost of the war to taxpayers, a majority of whom are opposed to the war, and contributes heavily to our faltering economy.

President Bush's justification for the military surge in Iraq was that "reducing the violence in Baghdad will help make reconciliation possible." But by all accounts, Iraq's political progress is stagnant, and what little progress has been made is fragile and can be easily reversed by raging violence outbursts such as those we have recently seen in Sadr city. This violence reminds us again that the Administration's strategies have been plagued by poor planning and a lack of accountability.

The fact that General Petraeus refuses to set a timeline by which progress should be made and for when troops should come home from Iraq signals that he sees no end in sight for this war. The American people, and many of my constituents, have made it clear that they are running out of patience, and that they want our troops out of harm's way. Unfortunately, the testimony given this week by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker was more of the same discouraging testimony we heard last fall.

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In the coming weeks, Congress will consider a supplemental appropriations request, and you can be sure that I will fight for funding to go towards important priorities for our district and our nation, and not for President Bush's open ended war in Iraq.